



**Violence Policy Center**

1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
Suite 1014  
Washington, DC 20036

202.822.8200 voice  
202.822.8205 fax  
[www.vpc.org](http://www.vpc.org) web

# The Ruger Mini-14 The "Poor Man's Assault Rifle"



July 2011

## The “Poor Man’s Assault Rifle”

Founded in 1949, the “corporate motto” of Sturm, Ruger & Co. is “Arms Makers for Responsible Citizens.” But as can be seen from the chart below, Sturm, Ruger firearms are also often found in the hands of mass shooters.

The attack in Norway by Anders Behring Breivik, apparently involving a Ruger Mini-14 assault rifle, is only the most horrific of the mass shootings involving the company’s products.

<b>Examples of Mass Shootings in the United States Involving Sturm, Ruger Firearms</b>		
Mass Shooting Incident	Casualties	Firearm(s)
Hartford Distributors Manchester, Connecticut August 3, 2010 Shooter: Omar Thornton	9 dead (including shooter), 2 wounded	Sturm, Ruger SR9 pistol
Wedgewood Baptist Church Fort Worth, Texas September 15, 1999 Shooter: Larry Gene Ashbrook	8 dead (including shooter), 7 wounded	Sturm, Ruger P85 9mm pistol .380 pistol
Thurston High School Springfield, Oregon May 21, 1998 Shooter: Kip Kinkel	4 dead, 22 wounded	.22 Sturm, Ruger rifle .22 Sturm, Ruger pistol 9mm Glock pistol
Long Island Railroad Long Island, New York December 7, 1993 Shooter: Colin Ferguson	6 dead, 19 wounded	Sturm, Ruger P-89 9mm pistol
Luby’s Cafeteria Killeen, Texas October 16, 1991 Shooter: George Hennard	24 dead (including shooter), 20 wounded	Sturm, Ruger P-89 9mm pistol Glock 9mm pistol
Palm Bay shopping center Palm Bay, Florida April 23, 1987 Shooter: William Cruse	6 dead (including 2 police officers)	Sturm, Ruger Mini-14 assault rifle

In his book *Assault Pistols, Rifles and Submachine Guns*, noted gun expert Duncan Long details the Mini-14's military heritage from the U.S. military's M14 battle rifle:

"The Mini-14 is not just a scaled-down M14; it's also an improved version....Ruger's Mini-14, which was aimed at (and for a time, sold only to) the law-enforcement and military markets, was introduced in 1972. Because demand was great in the civilian market, the 'sporterized' semiauto version with a 5-round magazine was introduced in 1976. Though no large military sales ever were secured, the rifle was very competitively priced. The public and police markets have made it a commercial success...."

Long notes, "The Mini-14's inexpensive price has made it the 'poor man's' assault rifle in many ways." Its price, he states, is "often only half that commanded by many military-style rifles on the market." Long concludes, "The Mini-14 is a handy, affordable rifle that is capable of being modified for combat or used as a sporter."

### **The Mini-14's Appeal to Anders Behring Breivik**

In his manifesto, *2083—A European Declaration of Independence*, Breivik discusses his choice of the Ruger Mini-14 and states, "Have no doubt, every single political contribution counts whether it is through the barrel of a Ruger Mini-14 or through an essay! The former will amplify the latter and vice versa." A review of the document reveals the following.

- **Breivik clearly understood that the firepower of militarized weapons is "just as efficient" as explosives.**

"For those Justiciar Knights who feels it would be simply too risky or unrealistic to successfully manufacture explosives of the appropriate or required quanta there are other just as efficient methods of shock attacks that are available to us. Shock attacks or more precisely armed assaults, involving assault rifles or pistols, on concentrations of category A and B traitors...."

- **Breivik selected the Ruger Mini-14 rifle because it was the most "army like" available to him. He called his rifle "Gungnir" — the spear of the Norse god Odin.**

"I have now sent an application for a Ruger Mini 14 semi-automatic rifle (5.56). It is the most 'army like' rifle allowed in Norway, although it is considered a 'poor man's' AR-15."

"3 rifle training sessions was completed during this period. The intention was to acquire a minimum of experience with, Gungnir, my semi automatic Ruger Mini 14, .223 caliber...."

- **Breivik's choice of language closely tracked an article in the August 2010 edition of *Gun World* magazine that described "Ruger's Mini-14 Tactical Rifle" as "'Combat Customized' From the Factory" in its headline. The enthusiastic article noted:**

"Ruger's Mini-14 Tactical Rifle is a version of the well-established Mini-14 incorporating many of the assault rifle features that end users have being [sic] applying themselves for decades, this time straight from the factory."

"Being seen over the years as a sort of '**poor man's assault rifle**' the Mini-14 has spawned a huge array of after-market parts that may be applied to make it more '**assault rifle-y.**' Recently Sturm, Ruger & Co. finally decided to get into the act themselves by producing their Mini-14 Tactical Rifles." [See photo below, emphasis in text added]



*Ruger Mini-14 Tactical Rifle from Ruger Website*

- **Breivik repeatedly noted that fully automatic (machine gun) fire capability is not necessary for armed terror attacks.**

"You don't really need to practice on full auto mode. The most important thing is that you familiarise yourself with recoil in combination with high speed aiming. This can be done with semi automatic rifles....I legally own...a semi-automatic Ruger Mini 14 and have managed to familiarize myself with high speed target acquisition in relation to the recoil by firing one round at a time. Automatic mode is not practical for 5.56 and 7.65 assault rifles as it is more or less impossible to accurately hit a target

while 'spraying' in one direction."

"As I have now acquired a legal semi automatic Ruger Mini 14 I can legally practice at the gun range. Full auto training is not really required."

- **Breivik understood and advised others to make full use of high-capacity ammunition magazines.**

"How much ammo does a soldier bring to a battle?"

"He should bring a total of two ammo pouches with room for 6 banana clips and one in his rifle so a total of 7 banana clips."

- **Breivik also understood that an assault rifle like the Ruger could defeat police body armor.**

"As for assault rifle ammunition, standard ammo will easily penetrate the most commonly worn protective vests...."

- **Finally, Breivik noted the easier availability of militarized weapons in the United States compared to Europe.**

"I envy our European American brothers as the gun laws in Europe sucks ass in comparison."

### **Ruger Rifle Exports, 2000 to 2009**

According to data from the U.S. federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), from 2000 to 2009, Ruger produced 2,598,825 rifles (Mini-14 and other models). Of these, 169,595 (6.5 percent) were exported (see chart on next page).

In addition, Ruger is one of the few U.S. firearm manufacturers that is not a private corporation. As a result, far more information is available about the corporation than many other U.S. gun manufacturers. Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc. has been publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange since 1990 under the ticker symbol RGR.

<b>Sturm, Ruger Rifle Production and Exports, 2000 to 2009</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Rifles Produced</b>	<b>Rifles Exported</b>
2000	309,017	12,868
2001	243,600	9,504
2002	303,507	14,206
2003	234,595	15,004
2004	248,884	15,408
2005	218,180	16,285
2006	196,472	17,662
2007	222,902	21,611
2008	261,663	26,153
2009	360,005	20,894
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,598,825</b>	<b>169,595</b>

\*\*\*

*For more information contact Violence Policy Center Legislative Director Kristen Rand at (202) 822-8200 x102, or [krand@vpc.org](mailto:krand@vpc.org).*